

Flashback

To know nothing of what happened before you were born
is to remain ever a child—Cicero

The Bellamy Boys Pledge Allegiance

If one man's heaven is another man's hell, what do we call Edward Bellamy's novel *Looking Backward*?

Back in 1887, Bellamy imagined an America of the year 2000 in which all residents have been drafted into an "Industrial Army." Individual liberty has been extinguished. Toil is compulsory, as "every able-bodied citizen [is] bound to work for the nation, whether with mind or muscle." Cooking is done only in public kitchens, music is performed only by conscripted professionals, and even rain is a thing of the past, as cities are guarded by enormous tarps. "In the nineteenth century," explains one character, "when it rained, the people of Boston put up three hundred thousand umbrellas over as many heads, and in the twentieth century they put up one umbrella over all the heads."

Under the One Big Umbrella, separate states have disappeared, for "state governments would have interfered with the control and discipline of the industrial army." Bellamy called his philosophy "Nationalism." Historian Arthur Lipow notes that "Bellamy's authoritarian socialist views were an historical precursor of totalitarian collectivist ideological currents."

This seems as close to a prescription for mass slavery as has ever been written. But to Edward Bellamy, it was utopia.

Looking Backward sold more copies in America than any novel since *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Its message was spread by 150 Nationalist Clubs, whose members were dedicated to regimenting their countrymen.

In an 1889 Nationalist manifesto, Bellamy stated that patriotism must be

co-opted in order to achieve Nationalist goals. He urged his followers to "identify themselves with National traditions and aspirations." Enter cousin Francis Bellamy.

Francis Bellamy, born in Mount Morris, New York to an itinerant Baptist preacher, was in the process of losing his faith. He had been a minister and Prohibition Party speaker before turning to "Christian Socialism" and delivering such sermons as "Jesus the Socialist."

Francis was a charter member of the First Nationalist Club of Boston, and promoted the Nationalist creed in the populist magazine *Arena* (whose editor Benjamin Flower wrote scornfully of Nationalism: "All individualism would be surrendered to that mysterious thing called government"). Looking for practical ways to advance his causes, Francis Bellamy became an editor with *Youth's Companion*, a popular children's magazine.

Bellamy took a lead role in promoting the National Public School Celebration of Columbus Day in October 1892. His address upon the Columbus quadricentennial, among other things, dismissed religious schools. "The training of citizens in the common knowledge and the common duties of citizenship belongs irrevocably to the state," he argued.

The centerpiece of Columbus Day was to have been the flying of U.S. flags above every schoolhouse in the land. But a 23-word oath written by Bellamy for the September 8, 1892 edition of *Youth's Companion* stole the glory.

Bellamy called it a "Pledge of Allegiance," probably choosing the word "pledge" because it was redolent of the



temperance movement. His single felicitous sentence—"I pledge allegiance to my Flag and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all"—was published anonymously, which enabled various liars to later claim the Pledge as theirs.

For an editor, Bellamy hated to be edited. He was indignant when in 1923 and '24 the National Flag Conference expanded "my flag" to "the flag of the United States of America." In 1929, he ridiculed an effort to add a line to the Pledge vowing adherence to Prohibition. A lapsed Baptist, he would have opposed the 1954 addition of "under God."

In later years, the editors of the *Youth's Companion* spitefully denied Bellamy's authorship. Bellamy spent the decade before his death in 1931 ferociously promoting his claim. Ratification came, tardily. In 1939, a panel of distinguished historians convened by the U.S. Flag Association determined that Francis Bellamy was the true author of the Pledge of Allegiance. A 1957 Library of Congress investigation concurred.

And so, looking backward, we end our tale with a twist. The *Youth's Companion*, in asserting that the Pledge was written collectively by its staff, was positively Bellamyite. Francis Bellamy, proudly asserting his sole authorship, was the individualist heretic.

The author of the Pledge of Allegiance would have made a very poor member indeed of the Industrial Army.

—Bill Kauffman

Working Lunch

Wisdom...is social. She seeks her fellows—Thomas Jefferson

Freedom Fighter

*Radek Sikorski, a snappily dressed Polish citizen who speaks English better than most Americans, heads the New Atlantic Initiative, a project that encourages free trade between the U.S. and the European Union, military cooperation, and strengthening of the new democracies in central Europe. Prior to arriving at the American Enterprise Institute earlier this year Sikorski traveled with the mujahedin in Afghanistan, wrote two well-received books, and served as deputy defense minister in one of Poland's first post-Communist governments. He later served as Poland's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. He hasn't yet celebrated his fortieth birthday. Sikorski is married to prominent British journalist Anne Applebaum, author of the forthcoming book *The Gulag*. One of his personal projects has been restoring a Polish manor house called Chobielin.*

TAE: How long did it take you to buy Chobielin?

SIKORSKI: Years and years. It was in still-communist Poland then. We were one of the first families to do something with the intention of restoring a piece of Polish culture. The house and the land it sat on cost \$1,200, the value of a small car (which was a great luxury then). It was a ruin, of course. My goal was to return it to a state where people would say, "Gosh, somehow communism didn't penetrate to this remote place, and this thing was saved." You want to feel rooted in the land, and there we do.

TAE: Are Poles beginning to think of themselves as part of Western Europe?

SIKORSKI: We feel we never left Western Europe. We were wrenched out of

Western Europe by Stalin and the Red Army with the cooperation of the allies; a tragedy. Politically, the Second World War ended for us in the 1990s. That was when we rejoined the family of nations we feel we've always belonged to. Western European culture without Chopin or Copernicus is unimaginable. Poland was a democracy in the eighteenth century when absolute monarchy was the fashion of the day.

TAE: What are your thoughts on the European Union?

SIKORSKI: The E.U. needs to become more transparent, it needs to become more democratic. It needs to clearly define the responsibilities of nation states and of the central E.U. government. Many people are afraid of ever-closer union, that we will integrate until we are all identical Europeans. We don't want that. Countries should remain independent.

TAE: What pitfalls should Poland avoid as it enters the E.U.?

SIKORSKI: To paraphrase Margaret Thatcher, "Having done away with socialism at home, we don't want it imposed from Brussels." Poland is now a country with a market economy. We do not need another revolution.

TAE: Are you concerned about the anti-U.S. rhetoric that's going on in the highest levels of the E.U.?

SIKORSKI: Sure I am. It's something we have to pay attention to. But some of it is just rhetoric. I don't think there are fundamental differences of interest between Europe and the U.S. There may be differences of phase—for instance, America has been attacked viciously by Islamic

extremists, while Europe hasn't had a September 11, yet.

TAE: As someone who has spent time in Afghanistan, what do you see as the possibilities that a reasonably democratic regime will emerge there?

SIKORSKI: Democracy is a tough business in a country that is so diverse ethnically, where so few people have basic education, where so few people are part of the owning class. Yet there are democratic traditions in Afghanistan—in a village the Emir will receive petitioners in public. That may not be democracy, but at least it is open government. What should be established is a good federal constitution that gives rights to particular religious and ethnic groups wherever they live. It would be a disaster to try to create a strongly centralized government in Kabul. You want the government in Kabul to represent the country abroad, to create a modern integrated army and police force, and to distribute foreign aid. The ethnic groups should do the rest.

TAE: Is there a chance that radical Islamists could take over a new Afghan government?

SIKORSKI: Yes there is. But there are some we can work with. People like assassinated Northern Alliance leader Ahmad Shah Massoud. He would come to a village and say things like, "The prophet, blessed be he, has said that you must go as far as China in search of knowledge. Therefore, we must build schools." He saw Islam as defining life, but also wanted to modernize the country.

